



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

A GOOD WORD FOR JEWS.

BY KARL BLIND.

AT A TIME when wretched fanatics of the Stöcker and Schönerer type once more try in Germany and Austria to rouse the worst crusading spirit against fellow-citizens of the "Semitic race," whose forefathers have lived in the same country with theirs for a thousand years and more, it is always pleasant to look upon a picture of nobler conduct in days of yore. Men are apt to speak of the early middle ages as of an epoch of unmitigated barbarism. Yet no fact stands out more clearly from the corresponding chapter of history than that Jews, especially in Germany, enjoyed then far greater toleration, far greater rights, than in the centuries which followed.

It was mainly the wars for the recovery of the so-called Holy Sepulchre which brought about the change for the worse in the sense of religious persecution. Even then it took some time before the populace could be egged on to the most fiendish atrocities; for, truth to say, its heart was *not* in the cause of the crusaders. From so unimpeachable a source as the Chronicle of the Abbot of Ursperg we know that when these militant salvationists gathered together during the reign of Konrad III., the first Hohenstaufen King and Emperor of Germany, they were publicly sneered at all along their route through the different towns. The Abbot expressly states that well-nigh the whole German nation (*omnis pene populus Teutonicus*) thought the crusaders were seized with an unheard-of folly, amounting to a delirium (*quasi inauditâ stultitiâ delirantes*). This sarcastic attitude of large masses continued for a long time. Hence the crowd of would-be deliverers of a mythical Holy Sepulchre had often to run the gantlet of jeers and gibes, in which the Papacy and the whole organization of the church made a public sport.

It was only by means of a continued system of terror that the Papacy then kept itself at its exalted height. This terror, however, was sometimes met by the firmest resistance. In the reign of the free-thinking Emperor Frederick II. of Germany (1215-1250), we find the notorious inquisitor, Konrad von Marburg, the forerunner of Hoogstraten, Torquemada, and other scourgers of heresy, busily engaged in purging Germany from reformatory aspirations. A reasonable state policy ought to have induced the Kaiser to put a stop to this infamous cruelty at once. In his own quarrels with the Pope, who employed against him the well-known language of wrathful theocracy, Frederick II. did not mince his expressions. He occasionally called the so-called vicegerent of God a "dirty priest," a "dragon," an "infernal beast"—words which were but counterblasts to Papal allocutions of equal strength. But all the while Frederick issued decrees for the persecution of the Waldenses, and allowed the inquisitorial agents of the Roman court to overrun the German kingdom for the purpose of burning heretics whose mild skepticism fell far short of his own advanced free thought. It was the Cæsarist vein in the gifted Emperor of the Swabian House, it was his jealousy of anything savoring of the independent, self-governing spirit of the people, which thus led him astray in practical politics.

Still, not only among the masses, but also among the landed aristocracy and the military knighthood of Germany, there was even then a strongly-developed anti-Papal tendency. Any one conversant with the political and anti-clerical part of our minnesinger literature knows that, three hundred years before Luther, this tendency found utterance in a number of lays almost as bold as anything written during the Reformation. Nor is the sequel of the policy of Frederick II., in the case of the Grand-Inquisitor Konrad von Marburg, less instructive. No government action being taken against the bloodthirsty priestly fiend, a number of knights one day simply fetched him out of his house, and then and there, with but scant formality, killed him like a mad dog. High-handed as the act was, Germany for a long time afterwards was not troubled any more by attempts to employ the practices of the Inquisition.

These rapid introductory remarks are made to give a truer picture of the popular mind of the early middle ages than is often to be found. The farther, moreover, we go back in that

epoch, the better it is seen that persecution of people of the Mosaic faith only began and grew in connection with the persecution of Christian heretics or free-thinkers by the Roman Church.

In a recent valuable work on "The History of the Educational System and the Culture of the Jews in France and Germany (X.—XIV. Century),"* by Dr. Güdemann, a rabbi at Vienna, it is correctly stated that the Germans, for a long period after their conversion to Christianity, were by no means hostile to the Jews as a race or a religious community. The Christian creed, it may be remembered, had made its way in large parts of Germany with some difficulty. It took a thirty-years' war before the Saxons were finally converted by the sword of Karl the Great amidst horrible cruelties, and deprived of their ancient rights of self-government. For generations many of the professed adherents of Christianity were still, at heart, scarcely weaned from the belief in Wodan, Thunar (Thor), and Frick, or Freia. Nature-worship in the forest, on the hill-top, on the river-side, at brooks, and on the sea-shore was deeply engraved in the Teutonic mind. And so long as this personification of the forces of Nature still had a strong hold upon popular fancy, the descendants of the exiles and emigrants from Palestine were comparatively free from molestation—nay, even often held in considerable esteem. This is a point clearly brought out by Dr. Güdemann's book.

For aught we know, many of the early German converts have thought the story of their own Goddess of Love and of Balder's death—if it was current among them in the form we know from the Edda—to be remarkably akin, in its main points, to the account contained in the Romanist's new faith. For that very reason they may have remained somewhat skeptical as to the alleged crime charged upon the Jews. Altogether our German forbears, during their heathen history, had distinguished themselves by a spirit of fairness toward those of another creed. There is no instance on record of a non-believer in the Teutonic religion having had to drink the cup of hemlock or to die on the cross for the sake of his faith. Recent excavations in eastern Germany have shown that foreign merchants, Phœnikian or Etruscan, were buried

**Geschichte des Erziehungswesens und der Cultur der Juden in Frankreich und Deutschland (X.—XIV. Jahrhundert). Von Dr. M. GÜDEMANN, Rabbiner und Prediger in Wien.*

there, in gray antiquity, among our heathen ancestors, with the symbols of their own religion peacefully placed in their tomb.

“The first German Jews of whom authentic mention is made in history appear,” as Dr. Gudemann phrases it, “at once in the best society.” Karl the Great, though barbarously cruel against the Wodan-worshipping Saxons who resisted his imperial ambition and aggression, had a Jew of the name of Sedechias as his physician-in-ordinary. Among the ambassadors whom the powerful Frankish Kaiser sent to Harun Arraschid, or al Raschid, there was also a Jew of the name of Isaak. It was that “Semetic alien”—as some preachers of intolerance of our day might say—who chiefly aided in making the diplomatic mission a successful one. Furthermore, Karl the Great (Charlemagne, as the French call that Frankish Teuton conquerer) promoted Hebrew science in Germany by transplanting a Jewish family of scholars, Kalonymos, from Lucca to Mainz.

Again, the queen of Karl’s son, Lewis the Pious, and many noble ladies of her court, were very favorable to the Jews. Highly-instructed Christian men of that time preferred the works of Philo and Josephus to the Gospels. Clerics themselves were often on the friendliest terms with Jews. Christians visited the synagogues, and declared that the sermons of the rabbis pleased them better than those of their own priests. Bodo, a priest at the imperial court, and another cleric, Wikelin, or Wicelinus, even became converts to the Mosaic faith. The latter went the length of justifying his step by a pamphlet in which he attacked the doctrines of the Christian Church. Siegebert, a renowned Benedictine monk at Metz, in the eleventh century, gave preference to the Jewish interpretations of the Bible on account of the superior learning of the Jews—a quality to which testimony was often borne in those days by church dignitaries of eminence. Clerics and monks learned Hebrew from their Jewish fellow-citizens.

When Adalbero, bishop of Metz (984–1005), died, he was sincerely mourned by Jews. Christians and Jews sang before each other the melodies of the church and the synagogue for the sake of mutually adapting them to their own divine service. Jews sometimes adopted Germanic names—even mythological ones, such as Fasolt, the name of a giant of the old pagan system of creed. There were intermarriages also between persons of the two

different creeds. Among the German peasantry and the common townfolk a notion cropped up here and there that the Mosaic faith was the truer one. Throughout the German kingdom the commerce of the Jews was unrestricted then. They had freedom of settling in any part of the country. For their sake market-days were transposed from Saturdays to Sundays. In accordance with the practice of the time, Jews could buy slaves, nay, even receive them, by circumcision, into their own community—a habit which naturally led to some degree of intermixture of race. Though, from the point of view of the principles of humanity now prevalent, the custom of slave-buying has to be reprobated, the fact just mentioned, with the concomitant permission of a change of religion in the bondsman, shows that there was a remarkable latitude of action allowed to Jews, and no fanatic feeling at all against them.

Jews were then a most travelled race and preëminently in possession of the larger commerce. Their educational system and their literature were flourishing, judged from the standard of the period. At the same time, they felt themselves bound up with the life of the nation among which they lived to a far greater extent than was the case later on.

But the year 1096, as Dr. Güdemann says, is “entered in blood-red letters in the annals of the German Jews, especially of those of the Rhinelands.” This was the year of the first Crusade. The grewsome persecutions which now began altered the Jewish character. It became timid, pedantically devotionalist, disheartened, superstitious, and pettily secretive—a change which, according to the author, left its traces for centuries. Small traffic and usury became now the means of sustenance for the hunted people, who often had to ransom themselves from the rapacity of the governing classes. Yet amid all this misery a nobler trait now and then flashes up; especially when the creed of the persecuted was touched by tyrannic, inquisitorial hands. Then, not seldom, a martyr’s spirit manifested itself, all of a sudden, in the full proudness of its conscience.

There is a great deal of evidence among Christian writers and poets of the middle ages which shows that usury was by no means an exclusively Jewish offence. The rift created by persecution between Jews and Christians was, however, made still more evident by the inquisitorial campaigns of Pope Innocent III., and

by his decree that the people of Hebrew descent had to be distinguished from their fellow-citizens by peculiar garments. In this way a pariah caste was marked out for public contempt. Yet among the Jews in the German Rhinelands there were not wanting examples of martial bravery and of civic spirit. During a siege at Worms, in the thirteenth century, Jews fought even on the Sabbath, with the permission of their rabbis, among the defenders of the town. At Köln, in 1270, when the citizens rose against the oppressive rule of the archbishop, there was, according to a rhymed chronicle of Gottfried Hagen,

“ . . . *der Jude, her Daniel,
Ein Kone burger und snel*”—

that is, “the Jew, Herr Daniel, a citizen bold and daring.” It is remarkable that the title of “her” (Herr), which was then as a rule reserved for men of noble origin, is given to him. The Bishop of Köln himself was so struck with the valiant bearing of Daniel the Jew that, when the latter had become his prisoner, he presented him to the victors as a model of bravery. In a campaign of Duke Adolf of Nassau in France, an almost incredibly large number of Jews—30,000—are mentioned as having formed part of the army. Though the statement is clearly an exaggeration, there can be no doubt of its having had a large basis of fact. It may be brought to recollection that in Spain, also, Jews performed good military service.

Among German minnesingers of the early part of the thirteenth century, there was a Jew, Süsskind, of Trimberg. He sang of the freedom of thought “which penetrates through stone and steel and iron; which goes quicker over the fields than the glance of the eye; which soars up into the air above all eagles.” He, however, had already a sad experience. Repelled by the rising spirit of intolerance, he says in one of his poems: “I was on a fool’s errand with my art; I will no longer go to the castles of noblemen that spurn me. I will grow a long beard of gray hairs, and live henceforth in old Jews’ fashion. My mantle shall be a long one; and deep down under my hat I shall walk most humbly. Seldom shall I sing courtly song any more, since noble lords refuse me their liberality.” The latter remark refers to the custom of wandering minstrels of those days earning their livelihood through free gifts presented to them by the high-born pro-

tectors of the poetic art. Walther von der Vogelweide and all the great mimic singers lived in the same way. It was the accepted rule of the time for the foremost members of the poetic guild.

There is another poem by Süsskind, reminding us strongly of Robert Burns's "A man's a man for a' that." In this he says that true nobility is not founded on birth or parchments, but on a person's noble sentiments, on his virtuous character. Where these are wanting, where vices prevail, the aristocrat's dress becomes a mere rag (*da mak daz adelkleit wol werden ze einem hadel*). But "him who cannot boast of a renowned family name, and yet steers clear of vice, and generously does his best, him I call noble, though he be not born in the ranks of the great." Principles and feelings like these show what might have become of the population of Jewish origin in those earlier days, had not the hand of the persecutor crushed these promising germs and committed atrocities at which Humanity veils her face in shame and sorrow.

Probably most persons ordinarily passing for learned might be questioned on Jewish literature, outside the Bible and its commentaries, without being able to give any author's name, except perhaps those of Maimonides and Spinoza—if the latter can be ranged at all within the circle of Jewish literature, properly speaking. Of the many men of Hebrew faith who, as disciples of the Arabs, devoted themselves to philosophy, poetry, astronomy, mathematics, medicine, and philology, few of the best-educated will be found to have heard so much as the names. Yet there is a perfect galaxy of distinguished Jewish men of that kind, even if we take only the period before the fourteenth century of our era.

As a contribution towards more universal knowledge Dr. Güdemann's work is a serviceable one. It is written with full learning, and at the same time in that laudable spirit of impartiality which extenuates nothing, nor aught sets down in malice. In the first part, the author describes the time from the foundation of Jewish science in northern France until the disputes which arose about the writings of Maimonides, who, like many of his faith in Spain, had taken his cue from the Arabs, then the exponents of Hellenic culture. A further chapter is devoted to the gradual decline of Jewish science in northern France through persecution and internal divisions until the expulsion of the Jews

from France. The Jews inhabiting what is now southern France originally were in close contact, intellectually speaking, with their brethren beyond the Pyrenees, who were under the influence of the Arabs. In dealing with this point, the author remarks that the Arabs "lay in the fetters of Greek philosophy"; and he thinks "this Arabic influence produced the opposed tendencies of rationalism on the one hand and of mysticism on the other—both equally pernicious to Judaism and to science." We can understand such a remark from the author's position and calling, without certainly approving of it. On our part, we would rather say that rationalism and mysticism are ingrained in the differences of the human constitution, and we would prefer the former, beyond question, to any hardened system of creed. Irrespective of this point, however, which only occupies a few lines in the work before us, everything is put before the reader in a very fair and praiseworthy manner.

There are noteworthy passages on the close contact between various "heretical" sects among the Christians and the Jewish communities in the Middle Ages. Often there were, before the hideous inquisitorial persecutions had been ordered from Rome, religious discussions between men of the two creeds. Not rarely did Jews come out triumphantly in those debates by showing up absurd superstitions and priestly impostures. Readiness of repartee and knowledge even of theology, of the Hebrew as well as of the Christian, were to be found more among Jews than among ignorant Catholic priests and monks. This was so well understood that warnings had often to be uttered from priestly quarters against allowing Goliath to enter into an intellectual fight with David. Goliath meant the Roman Church; David the clever Jewish disputant. It is on record that the deception practised by priests upon their flock by means of a so-called incombustible "holy coat" (similar to the "seamless Holy Coat of Triex" of our times) was once exposed by a Jew in the middle ages. He disproved its incombustibility by burning it. A great charge against the Albigenses, the *Pauvres de Lyon*, and other Christian sects, was that they held spiritual community with the Jews.

The loose life led by the Catholic priesthood, which formed a strong contrast to that of rabbinical teachers, drew Christian heretics and Jews still closer to each other. The details of the

gross excesses and debauches of the clergy in France—the bishops foremost among them—are such that it is difficult to mention them here. Of course, the oppressed laymen had to pay heavily for these lawless clerical pleasures, and therefore naturally rebelled against their dissolute shepherds. The torture-chamber and the stake were the means of overthrowing such opposition; and as Albigense and other heresy was thus cruelly dealt with, the Jews were at the same time enveloped in the fierce and fiery persecution.

At a moment when “anti-Semite” fanaticism is, unfortunately, once more rife in more than one European country, it is well to cast our eyes upon these historical pictures. From them we see how much better human progress might have been achieved had not the earlier friendly intercourse between Christians and Jews been ruthlessly interrupted by an hierarchical system which aims at universal dominion, both spiritual and political, and whose relentless teaching and practice even tainted the minds of not a few men of the subsequent Reformation. At the end of this nineteenth century, the ninth century stands out, in some respects, as an age of comparative enlightenment in the treatment of fellow-citizens of non-Christian creed. All the greater is the shame, and all the greater the necessity for combating tendencies of bigotry and obscurantism which are a disgrace to our age.

KARL BLIND.